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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001928

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SUBJECT: TURKISH PM ADVISOR ON ELECTIONS, REGIONAL ISSUES

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROSS WILSON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) Turkish PM/FM foreign affairs advisor Ahmet Davutoglu said the AKP's July 22 electoral showing was a big victory that effectively puts the party in Turkey's political center.

In a July 24 conversation with the Ambassador, Davutoglu expressed uncertainty about how PM Erdogan will handle the presidential race. On the one hand, many voted AKP to show support for FM Gul's candidacy in the April/May confrontation with the secular establishment; on the other hand, the mantle of legitimacy that consensus agreement on the presidency would convey would be helpful for the Turkey Erdogan wants to achieve. Davutoglu commented on Syria, Israel and Lebanon, and he expressed interest in the upcoming Middle East peace conference. Other topics included Iraq, the PKK, and Armenia (septel). End Summary

Turkish Elections

¶2. (C) Davutoglu hailed the AKP's election victory. He said the party got a big boost in its internal polling from the TGS e-memorandum of April 27, reaching 51 percent of the electorate in its aftermath before falling back somewhat. He agreed that most people voted to endorse the party's record of prosperity, effective governance and stability. It was remarkable that the AKP got support throughout the country, whereas support for MHP and CHP is confined to the west, and DTP got little backing west of Diyarbakir. This national legitimacy is a tool the AKP can use to push for solutions to polarizing issues, though Davutoglu acknowledged the solutions will still be very hard. He hoped that once in office, MHP and the DTP/independent MPs would each see that the other side is not made up of fascists and terrorists.

¶3. (C) Davutoglu expressed uncertainty about how the presidential election will play out. He said a lot of the AKP's support came from voters who back FM Gul and are angry about the secular establishment's derailing of his candidacy in April/May. Erdogan will have to gauge the attitude of AKP deputies and the internal party dynamics on this. By the same token, Erdogan will want to see the attitudes of others, especially the MHP. Independent deputies sympathetic to AKP will not be enough to get the AKP over the 367-seat quorum. New MHP deputies and some CHPers may want to avoid confrontation on this, including so they can hold on to their seats and not risk another parliamentary election. A broadly supported candidate will, Davutoglu acknowledged, have a legitimacy that will help Turkey at this point in its history. Ambassador underscored that and urged a pragmatic approach. Davutoglu agreed on the usefulness of consensus, but also complained that matters do not depend entirely on the AKP.

Middle East

14. (C) Davutoglu was coy regarding his recent contacts with and passing of messages between Syria and Israel. He would say only that Turkey's motive is to help avoid a repeat of the downward spiral that took place in mid-2006 which led to war. There had been a plan for FM Gul to visit Damascus right after the UN Tribunal was established to try to "calm the Syrians down," but this was postponed due to electoral issues here. Davutoglu traveled instead. He said that the problem of Syrian-Israeli relations is very hard. There is at present nothing to show for Turkey's efforts, but Davutoglu believes it could be useful to try and is keeping Israel informed. Turkey has also used its contacts with the Palestinians to encourage moves away from confrontation, though it is skeptical about what can be done in the near term. Davutoglu said Turkey would welcome information as soon as possible on US plans and thinking for our proposed international conference on the Middle East.

15. (C) Asked for US views on efforts regarding Syria and Israel, Ambassador said that the Syrian/Israel track is obviously an important one, but that the US is exceedingly skeptical about Syrian intentions. Most likely, Syria wants to use any contacts with Turkey and others to ease its international isolation, while not giving up activities that undermine regional stability -- in Lebanon, vis-a-vis Israel, etc. He urged that the Turks keep us briefed on contacts with Syria and that there be no surprises that could be damaging for Turkey in the US.

Iraq

16. (C) Davutoglu said he thinks that seeking an Iraq Neighbors Plus ministerial during the first half of September for a ministerial makes sense. The key is for the US to get

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the Iraqis to agree, but Davutoglu said he would try to get this on the agenda for Maliki's visit here in coming days. Davutoglu noted that Ramadan (September 13- October 11 in Turkey; dates may vary in Arab countries) could be a problem for some, in which case a mid-October or November ministerial may make sense. Re Turkey's contacts with Iraqi Sunnis, he noted that one group Turkey has been trying to draw into politics recently issued a press release (which he claimed was picked up by the Guardian newspaper) talking about the formation of a political wing, pursuing its goals through politics, and readiness to talk with the US. Davutoglu said that a more formal statement should be issued in coming weeks. He made clear that Turkey's expectations are limited.

PKK

17. (C) Ambassador suggested that there are new developments -- the election of DTP/independents to the Turkish parliament, Baghdad's proposal to have a trilateral Iraq-Turkey-US meeting on the PKK, the Maliki visit, and the possible Expanded Iraq Neighbors ministerial -- that can open up new avenues for diplomacy on the PKK. He stressed that this has to include dialogue with the KRG to be successful. Davutoglu reiterated previously-stated AKP government disappointment with the US over the PKK. He said that no one has argued more strongly for dialogue with Barzani. He agreed there are some opportunities to be used, but said no one should lose sight of the fact that the presence of PKK terrorists in northern Iraq is unacceptable.

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